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ASmith for meeting 6 Jan.

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MEMORANDUM TO THE DIRECTOR

**SUBJECT: Enemy Reaction in the Event no Government under
Souvanna is Established in Laos**

The assumed circumstances are that we do not or cannot persuade Phoumi to join a government, and as a consequence that there is no government formed under Souvanna. It is further assumed that Phoumi does not himself break the ceasefire.

PROBLEM

What would be the enemy reaction; would they generally maintain the ceasefire?

1. In the assumed circumstances we believe the antigovernment forces would undertake fairly substantial military operations in an effort to force the resumption of negotiations on terms favorable to them. We continue to believe that the Communists regard their prospects as excellent for achieving their immediate objectives in Laos -- a neutralist coalition government -- primarily by negotiation and political action and not by military conquest.

2. As for the scale of their military operations following a breakdown in negotiations, we believe that the antigovernment forces would not be likely to launch a drive for a quick military victory over the government. Throughout their campaign in Laos the Kong Le and Pathet Lao forces have pursued limited military

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objectives. We believe that the Communists have placed restraints on the level of their military action in order to reduce the risks of direct US military intervention. The Communists probably still believe that a major military campaign to seize the Mekong towns under government control would involve considerable risk of direct US military intervention and that such a risk is unnecessary to the ultimate achievement of their ends in Laos.

ABBOT SMITH
Acting Chairman,
Board of National Estimates

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